



As we move closer to Holy Week and Easter, the reading today is just one verse, one that is a great one to memorize. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." These words have a special impact when we realize that Paul was in prison as he pens these words — in prison for telling the story of Jesus Christ to a world that sometimes was and sometimes wasn't receptive.

Life is often like this. We can find ourselves in trouble even when we are trying to do good. We can experience what we might consider unfair situations even when we are trying to live right.

*Where in your life do you need the strength of Jesus Christ? What are the ways to open our hearts to that heavenly strength? How might this kind of relationship with Christ be a reward in itself?*

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Today we are looking at another single Bible verse that is well worth memorizing. Again, Paul is writing while he is in prison awaiting a death sentence for simply following and preaching about Jesus Christ in a world that was rapidly considering this gospel of freedom and grace as a threat, especially when Christians refused to worship the emperor of Rome. Some might look down on Paul for being in prison. Others see His God as letting him down, and others still question his willingness to suffer for Christ. But he clearly states, "I am not ashamed" and "I know who I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able." As we walk through Lent and mark the suffering of Christ, those who follow Christ often suffer too.

*I am not ashamed! I know who I believe; I am convinced, and He is able.*

*God is big enough.*

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The reading today, like all this week, is only one verse. A great exercise would be memorizing each of the five verses we will be looking at these five days as a gift to God and a blessing to us.

Sometimes we might wonder if God really loves us, is really with us, will be faithful in all the ways we know we need, especially during a difficult season. We might forget that the three years that Jesus had a public ministry were difficult and ended in a cross. Romans 8:33 reminds us that God has already given us Jesus, his life, teaching, death and resurrection. This is not a gift we are waiting for, it has already been given to us.

*God promises to give us all that matters and all that is of value. Do you think God cares more about what we have or who we are?*

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Lent is about walking with Jesus as He sacrifices His life for us. It is about repenting or turning from our sin. It is about what we give up to follow Jesus Christ, but it is also about the amazing rewards we get. It is about the Christian life.

There are two basic principles in this verse. The first is that the wages of sin is death. In a world that sometimes winks at sin, seeks to define it as less significant, the Bible teaches that sin separates from God, destroys what life can be and kills the soul. It is sin that cost Jesus His life. This is principle number one.

The second is the free gift of God, eternal life through Jesus Christ. If it is sin that cost Jesus His life, then it is the love of God that gave Jesus to the world.

Celebrate love!

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